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Conte calls for child centers funding

By Ron Clayton Correspondent

AT HENS, Tenn. — Tennessee first lady Andrea Conte said Tuesday she hopes the state can begin giving money to a network of child advocacy centers that treat abused children.

"I'd like to see some state funding," said Ms. Conte, wife of Gov. Phil Bredesen. "The government has a role as soon as we get to a point of extra dollars."

Ms. Conte visited the 10th Judicial District Child Advocacy Center to help celebrate as the center retired its mortgage.

Center director Teresa Grant said the \$90,000 mortgage was paid in two years with money from residents, businesses, civic groups, the United Way, and others.

Ms. Conte said Tennessee's network of centers is a model for child advocacy programs. Abused children can use the centers as a safe place to receive counseling and tell their stories to investigators in a nonthreatening environment.

She said there are 21 centers statewide, and only 11 receive any state help. She wants to see more centers and more state and federal support for them, Ms. Conte said.

"All of us are working to tap into every possible source for funding," she said.

Ms. Grant said the Athens center served more than 300 children last year.

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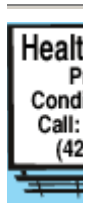
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